

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

MCT-01 SSM-03 IO-13 ACDA-12 /088 W

-----115653 151348Z /43

R 150815Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7091

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1362

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, LE

SUBJ: REBUILDING LEBANESE ARMY

1. DURING OUR MARCH 14 MEETING I DISCUSSED WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS RECENT CHANGES IN ARMY COMMANDERS AND SAID WE WERE ENCOURAGED BY SCOPE OF CHANGES AND FACT THAT GOL SEEMED TO BE GETTING AWAY WITH IT. BOUTROS SAID THERE WAS ANGRY OPPOSITION FROM LEBANESE FRONT AND BATTLE WAS NOT YET OVER. IN PAST FEW DAYS HE AND SARKIS HAD MET WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND AMINE GEMAYEL, BOTH OF WHOM HAD TAKEN REASONABLE POSITIONS. HE COMMENTED WRYLY THAT AMINE WANTED TO BE A CABINET MINISTER IN THE WORST WAY AND THAT MIGHT HAVE INFLUENCED HIS REACTION.

2. HE HAD ALSO MET WITH SULEIMAN FRANGIE FOR TWO HOURS THE NIGHT BEFORE, HOWEVER, AND HAD HAD A VERY NEGATIVE REACTION FROM HIM. I NOTED THAT FRANGIE DID NOT COMMAND A GREAT DEAL OF SUPPORT TODAY. BOUTROS SAID PROBLEM WAS THERE WOULD BE MEETING OF LEBANESE FRONT MARCH 14 WHICH WOULD BE INFLUENCED BY FRANGIE'S VIEWS AND COULD BE DRIVEN
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INTO TAKING A POSITION MORE NEGATIVE THAN CHAMOUNS OR GEMAYELS WOULD WANT. (MANY OF OFFICERS REMOVED FROM COMMAND ARE, OF COURSE, FRANGIE CLIENTS AND APPOINTEES.) BOUTROS SAID RISK WAS THAT FRONT WOULD DECIDE TO BLOCK MOVEMENT TOWARDS NATIONAL CONSENSUS. SITUATION WAS CAUSE FOR CONCERN BUT NOT YET TRAGIC.

3. BOUTROS SAID IT HAD TAKEN CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO
CONVINCE GENERAL KHOURY THAT HE MUST TAKE FIRM MEASURES.
BOUTROS HIMSELF HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH PICKING MOST OF
THE NAMES OF THE OFFICERS TO BE RELIEVED OF COMMAND, BUT
SOME OF THEM HAD OBVIOUSLY BECOME SYMBOLS WHO HAD TO BE
ELIMINATED. HE ASKED WHAT I THOUGHT OF THE APPOINTMENTS
MADE. I SAID THAT IN A COUPLE OF CASES, SUCH AS THOSE OF
FEGHALI AND KHAZEN, NEW COMMANDERS WERE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT
FROM THE PEOPLE THEY WERE SUCCEEDING. HE SAID THAT WAS
PERHAPS TRUE, BUT AT LEAST THEY WERE NOT IDENTIFIED WITH
POLITICAL PARTIES AS THEIR PREDECESSORS HAD BEEN. THEY
WOULD TAKE ORDERS FROM THE NEW COMMANDER FOR MOUNT LEBANON
RATHER THAN FROM POLITICAL PARTIES.
PARKER

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NNN

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